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The Revelation of St. John  
the Divine. By F. B.  
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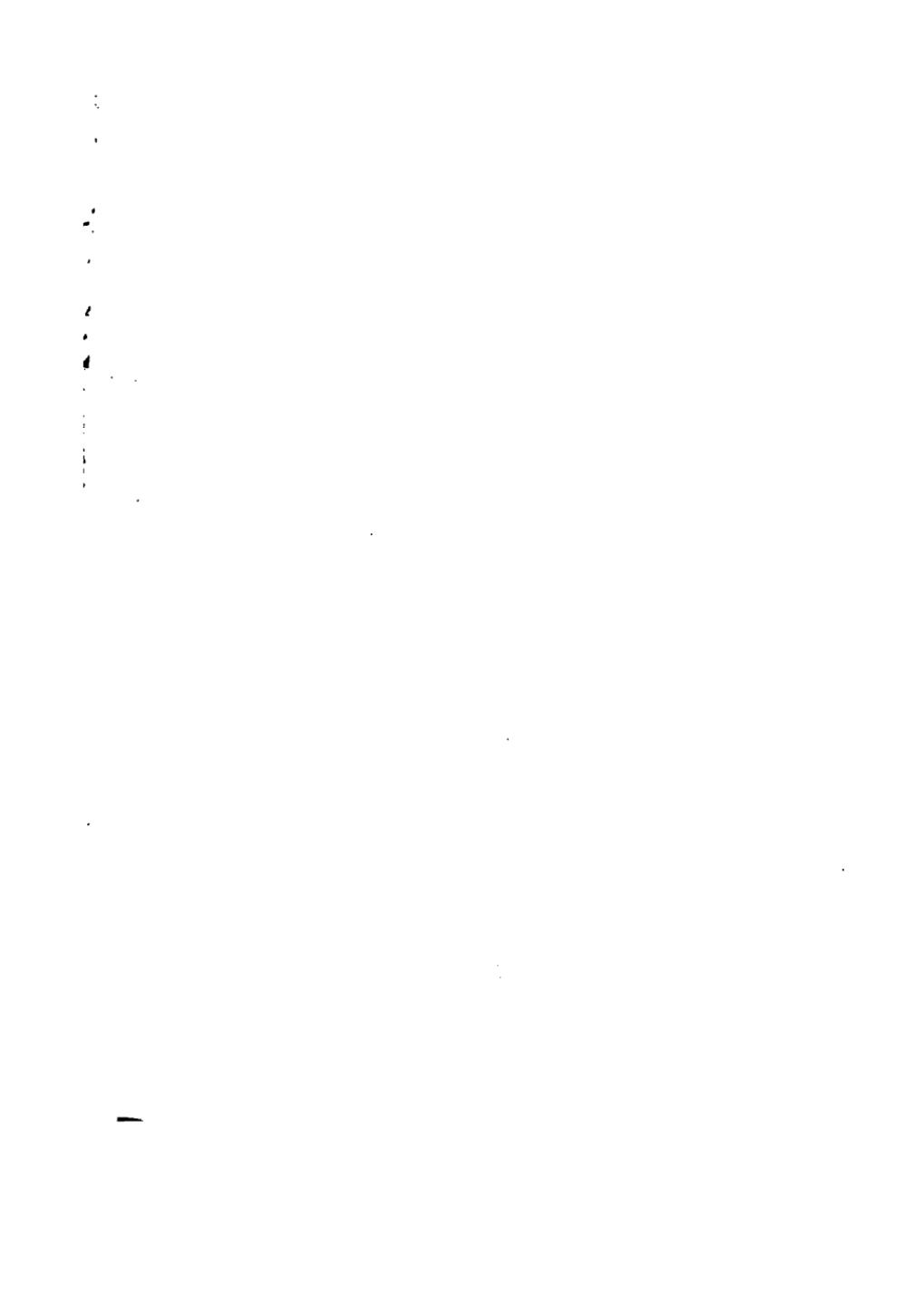
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The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.  
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.  
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.  
The nakedness of woman is the work of God.

*William Blake.*

Prisons are built of stones of Law,  
Brothels with bricks of Religion.

*Ibid.*



"I comprehend a love so fiery hot,  
It burns its natural veil of august shame,  
And stands sublimely in the nude, as chaste  
As Medicean Venus."

*Elizabeth Barrett Browning.*

Yea : lust insults, but love transfigures, sense ;  
And lust has veils, but inwardly is nude ;  
Love is the child unshamed, and lust, the prude ;  
Love human is ; lust, angel in pretence ;  
Familiar love can never give offence ;  
Self-conscious, anxious lust is ever rude ;  
For lust is only love's similitude,  
Distorted image of true excellence.



Be all the blight of God's immediate ban  
On savourers of poison at the feast  
Of Love, the bridegroom ! For as beast from man  
Immeasurably far, as man to beast  
Indefinitely near, so small the span  
From love to lust, so wide as West from East !





**The Revelation of St. Love  
the Divine**



‡

LEGION is Love ; or else he sums  
A thousand pomps of glittering train  
And splendid pageant ; for he comes  
In different shape to every twain !



So once I cried ; but now recall  
My error and recant my haste :  
Though Love be on the lips of all,  
How few can taste, how few can taste !





Some worship him with terror, lest  
Their urns of destiny he spill  
And spoil a sortilege more blest ;  
And these of terror have their fill !

55

While some, whose reckless passion spent  
Would count Affection far above  
Her origin and element,  
Have grown incredulous of Love.





ii

I care not for the man who seems  
Averse from women,—stern and staid,—  
Nor ever worships in his dreams  
The abstract, universal Maid.



I scarce believe he worships not ;  
I half surmise he worships ill ;  
And keeps his heart from waxing hot  
By cynic warpings of the will.





For what is buried in the bud  
Must either blossom forth or be  
Empoisoned ; for the virile blood  
Repudiates virginity.



Of those that love not, when they can,  
Most sinister I read the sign ;  
For who would holier be than Man,  
May holier be,—but less divine.





iii

The laws of God are not unmade,  
Howe'er we tamper with the text;  
On life this ordinance is laid,—  
That Mind can never be unsexed.



The Mind Religious gropes within  
The entrails of Earth's loveliness,  
By sinful touch to plant a sin  
In love that is not passionless;





And, cultivating foul alarms  
In maidens' unconsidering lives,  
Grants all allurement to the arms  
Of harlots,—less unnatural wives !

55

Their heart is colder than the grave,  
Their feet go down to ways of hell,  
But yet they barter semblance brave  
Of loving passionately well.





ii

When drenchings of maternal drill  
Have made our damsels' blood grow dark ;  
When joyless generations chill  
Its native warmth and quench the spark

36

Of impulse ; when no women dare,  
Rather than Love should be forsown,  
Accept the World's accusing stare ;  
What kind of creature will be born ?





What strange, weird creature, undesigned  
By God or Demon, and unknown  
To that instinctive human Mind,  
Which, holding from no Church his throne,



Was crowned by Him who strewed the dust  
Across the Void and Vast, to vex  
The reign of Death with Love and Lust,  
And cried on high, "Let there be Sex!"





¶

A pious, yet an evil, tongue  
Once wished the world were womanless,  
By some past folly strongly stung  
To folly's mood of bitterness.



For wilder still the wild pursuit  
Of fame and opulence would grow,  
More fierce the predatory brute  
Ambition, roaming to and fro,—





Impatient of another's need,  
And envious of another's food,  
Yet, brought to bay, so apt to plead  
The greatest number's greatest good,—



Save Love himself the mind divide  
From cupiscence to hate and hoard,  
And Woman draw the heart aside  
By sweet enticements of accord.





iii

For look you ! Man is selfish still,  
And selfish most, when most a prude ;  
Impatient to inflict an ill  
To win his own beatitude.



For what if God (avenging, say,  
The wrongs of Mary Magdalen  
And all her race) ordained to slay,—  
Not women, good or bad,—but men ?





Would damsels, with consenting word,  
Pronounce the new creation good,  
Unjealous of the mated bird,  
Her nesting hour and motherhood ?



Though some be born or nurtured nuns,  
Enfeebled with degenerate flaw,  
Their uninfected impulse runs  
From Tolstoi to díviner law,





### iii

Her sex pursues her ; though she take  
Strait vows to mortify desire,  
And contradict, for Jesu's sake,  
The ordinance of Jesu's Sire ;



Although the world's contempt she flout,  
To save her sisters from their shame,  
Or labour day and night to scout  
Unwedded Love's detested name ;





Or lave in blood her dainty hands,  
To heal the hurt ; or tend the sick  
In cruel, pestilential lands,—  
A flame, dividing dead and quick ;

53

The welling of her fairest deeds,  
Deflected from its natural course,  
From one instinctive fount proceeds,—  
Maternal love's familiar source.





### ¶¶¶

In companies of men, the theme  
Oft turns to Love; and all diverse  
Is everything they doubt or deem  
Of Love, the blessing or the curse,



In many different modes they speak,  
But still with contradiction rife,  
A thousand ribaldries that reek  
With all the littleness of life;



And if, perchance, one soul more wise,  
Who face to face with Love has stood,  
Remembers how his father's eyes  
Once on his mother used to brood,



So fast the jest and jeer go round,  
He dares not soar, while others tread,  
Lest folly pull him to the ground  
And ridicule his hardihead.





ix

And yet, methinks, the manual mark  
Of God on common things of Earth,  
The Presence in the wooden Ark,  
Is not solemnity, but mirth.



Though dread the unavoided lot  
To which all move and all succumb,  
And humour, suffering this, is not,  
And gladness, seeing this, is dumb,—





Yet Death is normal ; Life, the smile  
God paints upon the lips of Death,  
To make us dream a little while  
Of laughter and delight of breath !



And so to Love our laughter clings ;  
For dotard Death is dull to see ;  
But Love is youngest of all things,  
And full of immortality.





‡

I would not murder mean content,  
Nor give them wings that hate to fly;  
Not mine be their disparagement;  
Most mortals merely live and die.



For servants of a careless lord,  
Exacting not his dues of thought,  
Because he knows the tax abhorred,  
The poet's rhyme was never wrought.





'Tis wrought for those who doubt that Man  
Is only God's disordered toy ;  
Incredulous that he would ban  
Enjoyment, who created joy ;



But sure the universal search  
For pleasure, to its flock denied  
By each un-universal Church,  
By God himself is justified.





xi

The pious maid in terror walks  
    Of Man ; the pious man of her !  
Behind them both Religion stalks,—  
    Persistent, warning whisperer !



In endless eddies vaguely blown  
    By hatred of their own desire,  
They fancy Sex by God was sown  
    To feed the Everlasting Fire ;





The very love with which they're dowered  
In lustful dread of lust is drowned,  
For what avails a mind deflowered  
The virgin flesh that wraps it round ?



So Chastity in session cites  
To judgment all they say or see,—  
So many prisoners she indites,  
No room remains for Chastity.





xii

These carry, 'neath a tempting show,  
Like berries of a ruddy rind  
That children pluck from quick-set row,  
A poison for the tender mind.



With sinful interest in sins  
By heedless innocence unnamed,  
They run about with coats of skins  
For making naked babes ashamed.





Not robes, that lure the human ape  
To dalliance, stir their shameful blood;  
Only the white, innocuous shape  
Of unbedizened Womanhood,



They wear their sex upon their sleeves  
For daws to peck at; sexless they  
Alone, whom mutual passion leaves  
At leisure from the clinging clay,





### xiii

The mind that loves not leans to lust ;  
Impassioned minds alone are pure :  
They loathe to turn their wine to must ;  
They guard the vintage, safe and sure.



Not instantly they find their flower,  
Unsatisfied with easy goal ;  
But when they find her, hour by hour  
They live to learn her, soul to soul.





Stern chastity let others feel ;  
Strong principle let others prate :  
No blast of impulse makes them reel,  
From laws of lust emancipate.



No stranger woman lures or frights  
Their fancy ; they are fancy-free ;  
For knowing Love, they know delights  
More pure than boasted purity.





xii

The filthy mind that fears its thought,  
The captive mind that sins and sins,  
Believe redemption can be wrought  
By Parsifals and Lohengrins.



But worms, that in their mortal hour  
More numerous offspring would beget,  
Are duller than the mateless flower  
Whose sexes in one zone are set.





False prophets ! If ye seek to prove  
How passionate worms, ye judge amiss !  
Too amorous they to know of love,  
Too prodigal to care for bliss !



Because ye fear the gift of fire,  
Must all the Universe go freeze ?  
To amputate the World's desire  
Could never cure the World's disease.





xii

I know no more lascivious sight  
Than Parsifal before the walls  
Of Klingsor's castle; and no light  
Corrupter than from Wagner falls.



An honest man, who loved his dame,  
His bride or mistress, could have riven  
An easier passage through that flame  
Of flaunting courtesans to heaven !





Not his to parley with those fairs,  
To palter with their beckoning eyes,  
Or dream of bartering for such wares  
His own unpurchasable prize!



No chrismed spear need Manhood crave,  
To pierce the enchanter Folly's pale;  
He cleaves with Passion's trenchant glaive  
His path to Love, the only Grail.





**xi**

The poet of “the blameless King,”—  
How fancied he his hero spent  
His undetermined hours of Spring  
And mazèd masons of discontent?

**5**

How passed he that distempered age,  
Unformed, fantastical, perplexed,  
When ladies tease the pretty page  
And love to see him hot and vexed?





What disciplined his “heats of youth?”  
Or did he “eddy round and round”?  
Or dared old Merlin say the sooth  
And with true manhood kept him crowned?



Or held he, like Sir Galahad,  
All damsels in a nameless fear? . . . .  
Then was Sir Launcelot never mad,  
Nor ever false was Guenevere!





### xvii

For still Religion halts between  
The maiden's tomb, the infant's cot ;  
(Since only once the Nazarene  
Was in a virgin womb begot);



And doubtful which most aids his power,  
The small unconscious proselyte  
Or she that will renounce her dower  
Of womanhood, for God's delight,





He stands between the sun and shade,  
He teaches this impossible mean,  
That foul and common may be made  
By muttered magic fair and clean !



In vain he consecrates the wine,  
To purify the sacrament,  
In vain he sanctifies the sign,  
Except the inward grace consent.





### ¶¶¶

I cannot think they do God's will  
Who raise a sacramental sign  
High on the Galilean hill  
Where Jesus made the water wine,



And thither turn the damsel's eyes  
To seek a consecrated goal,  
Forgetful that the lover's prize  
Is only found within the soul





Where passion's Sancgreal fills the shrine,  
That else is empty, garnished, swept,  
And holds the only nuptial wine,  
The vintage from creation kept!



Beside the door, like rays of sun,  
The seraphs stand, to guard from sin  
The holy vase; but Love, as one  
Of royal birth, shall enter in.





**xix**

Come hither, child, and hear a thing  
Kept secret since the world began !  
And yet not I the message bring,  
But all the prophet-bards to Man.



When you the Marriage Symbol see,  
And votaries in abasement roll,  
Remember, the reality  
Inhabits nothing save the Soul.





Save in your heart of hearts you bear  
For him who sues to make you bride  
The very passion that would dare  
Of all but him to be denied,



No regent power assumed by Rome,  
No grace of less vicariate See  
Shall cleanse you, though you win a Home  
Or wanton in Society !





## 33

For how is Lust by Love arraigned,  
Base passion by the passion pure,  
If Love from loving be restrained,  
Or Love of loving be not sure ?

## 33

O bride that waits the bride-groom's arms,  
What bring you to his fond caress ?  
A spirit vitiate with alarms,  
Or enervate with emptiness ?





Then why unbolt the chamber locks,  
To crucifix and convent gear  
Admitting, when your husband knocks,  
The demon you professed to fear ?



Oh, rise and fly before he come !  
Lest passionate Love, by you defiled,  
Rush forth to seek a purer home ! . . . .  
Go, get you to a nunnery, child !





## xxi

God deemed that Eden's innocence  
Could not be kept by Man, *alone* :  
And Milton held, with sturdy sense,  
That flesh of flesh and bone of bone



Was shaped by God from Adam's side :  
No soul of alien saintlihead ;  
No basilisk thing,—a loveless bride ;  
But apt and willing to be wed.





But when, too cognisant of ill,  
With strange lascivious craft they strove  
To imitate by conscious will  
The sweet, spontaneous deeds of Love,

3

Death entered. . . . Yet not all was lost:  
Before the Seraph shut the gate,  
A little Love the threshold crossed  
And followed them disconsolate !





xxii

“ From superstition’s deadly thralls  
Deliver us,” we rightly pray,  
When History’s bloody page recalls  
The errors of an earlier day :



But yet, has superstition ceased ?  
What means this pilgrimage of brides,  
To join the sacrificial feast  
Where God himself, they say, presides ?





Although ambition be attained  
And conscience by the priest be freed,  
What if the sanction God ordained  
Be wanting,—Love's imperious need ?



If so, howe'er the Church impute  
The chastity her faith implies,  
These stand not far above the brute,  
That eats and drinks and multiplies.





xxxiii

Those celibates that crowd the sky  
And hold in simple fee their youth,—  
What think they of our litany  
Of plain and platitudinous truth,



That Marriage is the corner-stone  
Of Home; nay, more,—of Social Life?  
Or envy they the sweets unknown  
Of husband, family, or wife?





I know not how the angels fare;  
But this I know,—one soul at least,  
In robes of privileged despair,  
Shall flout the heavenly Wedding Feast ;

๓

Shall enter in and speak on high:  
“ Not by Thy law of sex I come  
Attired thus; but clothed am I  
By laws of Social Life and Home !”





## xxii

Meseems that individual guilt  
    Makes hiding-holes in common good,  
And many a victim's blood is spilt,  
    Because the priest delights in blood !



The marriage sanction feeds the strength  
    Of nations,—grown beyond all girth,  
Portentous,—and the venomous length  
    Of armies that enfold the Earth ;





But ever and anon, by fiend  
In hierachal robes arrayed,  
Some innocent, some lamb unweaned,  
Across the bloody stone is laid ;

The people half avert their eyes,  
Or else are held in selfish awe ;  
“The welfare of the most !” he cries ;  
And they respond, “ It is the Law ! ”





xxx

Hither the strolling Waxworks came ;  
    Her lover brought her to the Show,  
The very night he wrought her shame ;  
    A year ago, a year ago.



How different looks the sordid room !  
    What different folk have come to hear  
The magistrates dispensing doom  
    To devotees of tavern beer !





And must she now, for suffering wrong,  
Unwomanly confession make,  
Before this coarse, contemptuous throng? . . .  
For baby's sake, for baby's sake!

55

Her soul is sickening from the task!  
Her mother takes her nerveless hand;  
The wretched pittance she must ask,  
And bear the brand, and bear the brand!





### xxvii

O ladies,—ye whom passion stirs  
No more than thunder far away,  
That round the opal mountain-spurs  
Beats, like a summer sea, all day,—



Now tell me, ladies, when began  
The real crime between these twain?  
You answer, “ When the selfish man  
Plucked pleasure at her cost of pain.”





O sedulous to guard the fire  
Of Hymen's altar ! Yet ye prove  
Too much ; or else with me admire  
Her sweet abandonment of love. ,



Ye miss the man's essential sin,  
That even devils might dare to hate :  
He heard the Social Ghost steal in  
And whisper low, " Repudiate ! "





### xxvii

Brothels, 'tis true, are built of stones  
Religious; and the flaunting flower  
Of Marriage sucks from harlots' bones  
The self-respect the streets devour.



For Man made Marriage; God made Love:  
And Man the mystic Idol wrought  
As one should cast a silver dove  
And think the Holy Ghost is caught.





Are Idols, then, not wholly ill,  
Though formally condemned? . . He knows  
Who keeps the World in childhood still,  
And pleased with images and shows:



But, if the Social Ark we boast,  
Who boasts the social kennel-streams  
That bear it up? . . . The Holy Ghost? . . .  
We live in dreams, we live in dreams.





xxviii

Unlovingly these judgments sound ;  
And yet they shall not be annulled  
For all the beauty ever crowned  
With all the blossoms ever culled !



By prophets shall the world be saved ;  
For not with fleshly eyes they see ;  
And future peoples shall be graved  
With prophecies of poesy.



For all the singers teach us this  
(Though oft they sing with impulse blind),  
That only Love's victorious bliss  
By passion purifies the mind.



A myriad ways they shape the theme,  
While itching fools stand round and gape;  
They give occasion to blaspheme,  
But yet again the theme they shape!





xxx

Upbraid me not because I sing  
Outside the violets and thyme ;  
I cannot keep within the ring  
Where pretty poets pluck their rhyme,



And twist gay garlands for the feast,  
Believing that mere shape and hue  
Ennable men above the beast,  
Or worms that know not what they do.





The fairness of the flower is not  
Within itself ; but in the Mind  
Its heavenly beauty is begot  
By the Eternal Type behind;



And so I count the humblest reed,  
Toned to the stream of thought that flows  
About the world, an apter weed  
For minstrels than the trellised rose.





XXX

Some day, when war is self-devoured  
And buccaneering trade is slain,  
When over every land is showered  
The harvest of its native plain,



Art will be seen the noblest thing  
That God has ever brought to birth,—  
The soul through semblance shadowing,  
The saving salt of all the Earth!





For when the wolf is laid to sleep  
And serpents win no more regard,  
The World's entombéd Soul shall leap  
To light again,—the Sacred Bard!



No beggar of the public crust,  
No pensioner on treasure-trove,  
The great Antagonist of Lust,  
The great Evangelist of Love!





xxxii

They batter at the public gate,  
The beggar-bards,—a rabble rout !  
The Watch within is obdurate,—  
The priests and soldiers keep them out !



For those cry “Impious !” These cry “Fools !”  
Unless one sing a martial strain  
Or else his dogg’rel doctrine schools  
To time the sacerdotal train :





Him they admit; and him who brings  
A puppet-booth, where viler verse  
Is screamed by dolls to villain strings  
Than madmen to their walls rehearse!

3

Not yet the common mind abhors  
The bastard notes of genius bought;  
For e'en with poverty it wars  
Less fiercely than it wars with Thought.





xxxii

Rise, Poesy, and claim thine own !  
Let not young Science steal the thought  
Philosophy and Verse alone  
In happier days together wrought !



Give o'er, give o'er the twaddling lay  
Of moon and dream and passing mood,  
An insult to the dawning day  
Whose generations cry for food.





Imagination ! Truth's own son  
And sole interpreter ! O Art !  
Who weldest diverse things in one  
And cleavest unities apart,—



Religion search and Science scan,  
But yet of neither make thy choice ;  
Then of the Universe and Man  
Be thine the Vision, thine the Voice !





xxxiii

O Poets,—ye that sometime quaffed  
The mountain rills of Castaly,—  
If ye despise your holy craft,  
Let there be war 'twixt you and me !

§

For though a feeble sword I shake,  
With me the larger legions ride  
Of all who suffered for the sake  
Of Poesy and martyrs died.





They suffered an imperative stress,  
Bent bows that no man might unbend,  
To count the World unworthiness,  
To speak their message to the end.



The World tormented them and gave  
Salt tears and ashes for their food ;  
They laboured by an open grave  
And won of Death their livelihood.





xxxiv

Man's scanty title to the sun  
Imports the better right to die;  
And round and round the World would run,  
Though all the streams of Art were dry.



Cease, music, painting, sculpture, rhyme !  
Go, take to huckstering instead !  
Either degenerate is the time,  
Or ye are weaker than the dead !





Then to the source of Art proceed ;  
Burn all the Sacred Books ; spare none  
Except the Hymnal and the Creed,  
And Forty Articles, save one !



Blot out the monuments of Greece,  
The Roman and the Florentine ;  
Still would the shepherd wear the fleece,  
The butcher still sit down to dine !





xxxv

Still would the World go round and round,  
And poets that despise their art  
Could tend the flocks or till the ground,  
Or hawk in Thespis' apple-cart !



For better far to beg or dig  
(Though bards are beggars all, for praise)  
Than underneath the vine or fig  
To fashion unbelieving lays ;





And, doomed to odious labour, spin  
Songs without faith in song ; or chase  
A Muse not "glorious within,"—  
A painted doll, with double face !



A creature of enamelled phrase,  
The darling of a dalliant throng ;  
An idle song of empty days,  
Made emptier by an idle song.





The public is the judge, you say.

Now God forbid ! . . . Unless ye choose  
That fools should judge you, rather they  
Are judged by all the joy they lose.



Bread must ye win ; but none can live,  
Save public tools, by bread alone :  
There is a Soul that clamours “ Give ” !  
Ye surely will not give a stone ?





Feed your own soul and ye shall feed  
The World's,—the mind of honest men ;  
Not those who turn the cranks of greed  
In Mammon's pestilential den,

3

And issuing forth, with jaded wit,  
For recreation seek the schools  
Of charlatans ; unfew, unfit,—  
The public fools, the public fools !





xxxiii

I see Humanity as one  
Scarce adolescent Soul, that grows  
By seasons of no moon or sun,  
Nor destined to a senile close:



33

From age to age still journeying on  
To God, who evermore recedes,  
He hears, before, a benison ;  
Behind, he hears the crash of creeds ;



And casting off the worthless type,  
Though never quite exempt from clay,  
Becomes, with less corruption ripe,  
And grows mature, with less decay;



Till, mergent into happier state  
And nobler place than heaven or hell,  
Though never wholly consummate,  
He justifies the primal Spell.





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xxxviii

And Love I see, a weanling child,  
Kept by a sad, salacious crew  
In bondage ; ridiculed, reviled  
For antics he is taught to do.



To fuller stature he shall grow  
And cast away his childish things,  
His quiver and his puny bow,  
His arrows and pretended wings ;





That he may win his realm and throne  
From Lust, the tyrant, who by wrong  
Usurps those instincts that alone  
To Love's prerogative belong.



For though he be a weanling child,  
In him the worlds of soul and sense  
Are destined to be reconciled;  
But aeons hence, and aeons hence !





xxxx

Why preach profanity so great,  
Of Revelation standing still,  
And all of Man determinate,  
Save Science, grinding at her mill?



Of doom ordained two thousand years,  
That yet with God's connivance floats  
Suspensively, till Satan rears  
His proper complement of goats?





This Human Soul for ever grows ;  
This creature out of God's own hands  
Is dowered with fierce inherent throes  
To burst Religion's swaddling-bands ;



And that confusion, Love miscalled,  
The narrow cell in which he lies,  
Shall be unraftered and unwalled,  
And made commensurate with the skies.





xl

Ye boast of Science. . . . Has it touched  
The heart of man, or woman's mind ?  
Or is the poor old World as crutched  
As ever, and as deaf and blind ?



Besotted with the frantic fear  
Of poverty and crazed with greed,  
To buy men cheap and sell them dear  
Is all his Gospel, all his Creed ;



From battle-field to battle-field  
He limps along his bloody way,  
In vain by all the Past appealed  
And sightless of the coming Day;



The subtlest instruments designed  
By Science leave his spirit rude ;  
He worships still, in savage kind,  
His Fetish, Family, and Feud.





xli

As if the clock should mock the dial,  
Though puppet of the self-same sun,  
Young Science scorns thy wise denial  
Of purpose purposeless begun :



Let him not vex thee ; have no fear,  
Pale priestess of the trine tiar !  
Not hence thy danger. One is here,  
A worthier foe and greater far !





A maid not palace-reared is she,  
But born “in huts where poor men lie”;  
There first she wrought her wizardry,  
Her commerce with the earth and sky.



Not hers to force the gates of heaven,  
And, entering in, defile the fane;  
She labours with a secret leaven  
Among thy measured meal of pain !





zlii

Among the porticoes she walks,  
And marts "where men do congregate,"  
And there to lowly minds she talks  
Of those who "leave their first estate":



Their first estate of joy they leave,  
So pure, impassioned, and elate,  
And learn from Piety to grieve  
Because their hearts are passionate;





Or else, beside their natural wits,  
They fly where Piety has shown  
The painted actress Folly sits  
Upon her tawdry, tinselled throne;



Cloyed with her lavish, cold caress,  
To Piety they turn again,  
The unintending procress  
To Folly and to Folly's pain.





### xiii

So Art, the true Hypatia, speaks  
Of Love, with no uncertain tongue,—  
As erst she spoke to Jews and Greeks,  
As erst in Rome and Florence sung.



The secret hearts of men she fills  
With such unlicensed thought, I swear  
Saint Peter hates her;—from his hills  
Would flash and slay her, if he dare !





Too late he grieves his Books contain  
The cry of Love and human wrongs,  
Job's Epic of immortal pain  
And Solomon's Mask, the Song of Songs.

53

Art wrote the volume in his hand ;  
Himself by Art is crowned and shod ;  
And yet he cannot understand  
Art also is the Word of God.





### ¶liſt

Nay, rather,—can he read at all  
The sacred tidings clearly writ  
For those who have not lost, in thrall  
Of maddened fear, their mother wit ?



It runs from Genesis to John,  
Nor even then the message trips ;  
To Maccabees it journeys on ;  
One orbit of apocalypse !





For as men deemed the shining sphere  
Was almost in their hand's assay,  
Till drawn by lens and crystal near,  
It proved a billion leagues away,

55

So Revelation, once supposed  
The earthly footsteps of a God,  
Is clearer seen, yet less enclosed,  
In every place that Man has trod,





## 三

Is Man not marvellous enough ?  
Why will he ever seek, behind  
The soul that God has clothed with slough,  
The breath of more mysterious wind ?



He clammers to the lonely peaks,  
He drifts about the lonelier sea,  
To hear what Revelation speaks  
Beneath the night's immensity ;





He strives to pierce the outer dark  
Wherein the Soul and Sense divide ;  
But God has set his barrier mark ,  
Lest either pass from side to side .



The gamut of himself replies,—  
Of love that knows , of lust that fears ;  
The hate of truth , the hate of lies ;  
The hope of joy , the sense of tears .





## zlibi

The great procession lags along,  
With scarlet copes and smouldering fires,  
With banners raised and sacred song  
That Gregory stole from Grecian lyres.



Vicars of God, who judge the soul  
Eternally to bask or burn,  
Who read creation like a scroll,  
Nor e'en of God have much to learn,





The fulness of your day has been !  
The savour of the salt is lost !  
For lewder men have far foreseen  
A greater Feast of Pentecost.



Yet no miraculous device  
Shall touch your altars to their shame ;  
The frequent daylight shall suffice,  
The common sun shall quench the flame.





### xiix

The colours melt from shade to shade,  
From tint to tint,—a gorgeous cope;  
A purple pattern of brocade;  
The vestment of a Chinese pope.



A patch across the midst is sewn,  
Conspicuous, yet of like degree;  
By this the wearer may be known  
To keep his vow of poverty !





All Christian nations ought to wear  
That pretty emblematic coat,—  
With pretty emblematic tear,  
For conscience-clause and saving note!



Hang up a skull of beaten gold  
Above the feast! The words are dead  
Of One for thirty shekels sold,  
Who had not where to lay his head.





### xliii

With gamblers' faces weird and wild  
We press to hear new prophets preach ;  
Yet folded, docketed, and filed,  
How soon their most prophetic speech !



The labels wait me, ready penned,—  
Partitioned shelf and lacquered box !  
“Free-thinker” and “Free-lover” end  
The list begun “Unorthodox.”



“Free-thinker?” Yes; if thought be free  
Envassalled to the laws of thought!  
“Free-lover?” Yes; because to me  
All other loves than one are nought!



Old Dagon from his column slips  
Dislodged by no man; and I tire  
Of Evolution on the lips  
That advertise their own desire.





six

Apologists for God, descant  
No more upon his ways to Man !  
First justify the sycophant  
To God—who made him—if ye can.

§§  
9

There is no blasphemy, but one,—  
Of servile souls, who question not;  
Who think by favouring God to shun  
Perdition. This is unforget;





This is recorded. Happy they,  
If God rebuke them; like the friends  
Reiterant, of Job; nor slay,  
Nor bring them to untimely ends!



Because they speak the thing abhorred  
By honest tyrants; speak, for fear,  
Like slaves in presence of their lord,  
The tale they deem he lusts to hear.





## I

I close : and yet I have not said  
The things I give my life to say.  
O subtle tint ! O subtler shade !  
O glory still so far away !



But not of sunset ; no ! more white,  
More solemn, o'er the World's dark hill  
Bosoms the tide of living light,  
Of perfect Passion, perfect Will !





When God our captive sight redeems  
From old Religion's prismatic spell,  
That combs the sunshine into beams  
And separate hues of heaven and hell;



When all the signets are unsealed,  
Each after each, and Love, the last,  
In robes of wisdom is revealed,  
Amid the foil of folly past.





#### **NOTE**

**ONE or two words occur in the quatrains that are not to be found in dictionaries, and several quotations that are not verbally exact and are, therefore, not placed in inverted commas.**



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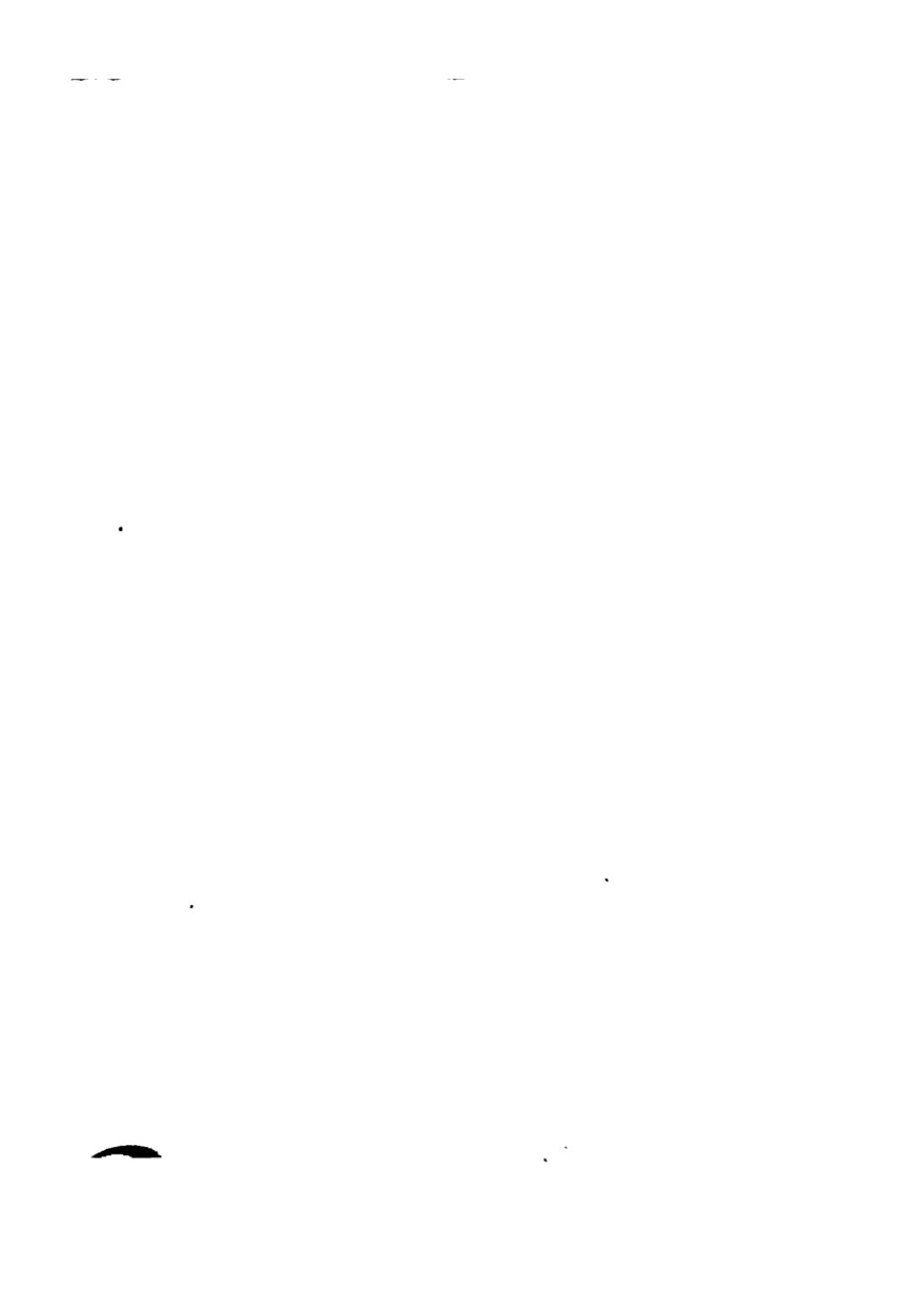
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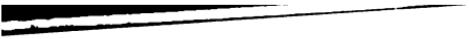
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